



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

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Taking the First Step: Tips for Discussing Psychological Health with a Provider

June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month, and contrary to popular belief, combat exposure is not the only contributor to this condition. A study conducted by the Naval Health Research Center found that non-combat deployment-related stressors play a significant role in contributing to cases of PTSD. This anxiety condition can result from experiencing an event involving direct or indirect threat of death, serious injury or a physical threat (e.g. car accident, sexual assault, witnessing a traumatic incident, etc.).

If you or a shipmate is experiencing symptoms that may be PTSD, starting a dialogue about the treatment process can be the first step toward wellness. Seeking help for PTSD and other stress-reactions is a sign of strength and can make a real difference in the lives of those who need support. While it may seem uncomfortable to talk about traumatic experiences, making a plan to speak with a mental health provider is one way to exercise Controllability and promote Predictability, two of the **Principles of Resilience** that can help make the process easier and less intimidating. The **Real Warriors Campaign** has useful tips to consider when seeking treatment to help maximize benefits and improve chances of a full recovery.

Choosing a Provider. Finding a health care professional that you are comfortable with can help you have a positive experience. If the first provider you meet is not right for you, keep looking until you find someone you feel a connection with. A psychological health care professional should respect you and your feelings, allow you to express yourself, understand that you may need time before you are ready to talk, and talk to you about a plan to help address your concerns.

Preparing for Your First Appointment. Keep track of any feelings or symptoms you experience with as much detail as possible, such as how long the feeling or symptom lasts. You should also note triggers, such as events, experiences or thoughts that may make your symptoms worse, and what you did to make them better. When preparing for your appointment, you should also list key medical and personal information. This includes your physical and psychological concerns, as well as names and dosage of any medications or supplements you're

taking. Noting major life changes, family members with psychological health concerns and traumatic events will also be helpful to your provider.

Getting the most out of your appointment. During your appointment it's important to answer questions honestly. You may be asked about traumatic experiences and/or your mood and reactions. You are encouraged to ask your provider questions as well so that you remain an active part of your treatment process (e.g. asking about what may be causing your symptoms or what treatments are recommended). It's helpful to take notes during your visit so that you can easily recall any information your provider discusses with you. You can also bring a close friend or family member to come with you for support.

Talking about your psychological health care can be challenging, but getting help early can improve your chances of a full recovery. If you're unsure of how to start talking about a traumatic event, **use this checklist as a guide** and bring it with you to your appointment. For additional support, contact the DCoE Outreach center to speak confidentially with trained health resource consultants 24/7 by calling 1-866-966-1020 or by using **Real Warriors Live Chat**.

*Navy Suicide Prevention Branch is a proud partner of the **Real Warriors Campaign**. Read more of their tips for discussing treatment **on NavyNavStress**.*



Check out this and other **Real Warriors Profiles** featuring service members who sought help for psychological health concerns.



Lifelink Spotlight

As part of a robust command Suicide Prevention Program, ongoing engagement is vital to encouraging dialogue about stress navigation and suicide prevention year-round. This month's Lifelink Spotlight features proactive efforts to engage Sailors with tailored stress navigation and suicide prevention resources, helping to advance efforts from promoting awareness to driving ACTION.

To help refresh their current informational materials and instill a sense of community responsibility, Sailors from Naval Construction Group TWO (NCG 2) recently developed their own suicide prevention posters. The new products include command insignia, photos of their command chaplains and key contact information to support shipmates in crisis. "The personalization is intended to promote individual and unit pride, and responsibility to take care of each other," said Lt. Cmdr. Paul L. Smith, Group Chaplain and Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC). The posters were mailed to each unit's SPC and are being displayed in their workspaces.

At Naval Air Station (NAS) Meridian, Sailors receive their daily dose of tips to navigate stress through the [installation's Facebook page](#), which regularly shares content from our [U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control](#) account. From reposting messages promoting seeking help and reaching out for confidential support through the [Military Crisis Line](#) or Navy chaplains, to wellness tips to boost psychological and physical fitness, NAS Meridian is helping to connect their community with the tools to stay healthy and mission ready. With nearly 3,500 likes, sharing vital resources through their Facebook page is one simple step toward supporting *Every Sailor, Every Day*.

Bravo Zulu to NCG 2, NAS Meridian and all others who are going the extra mile to support their shipmates and help break down the barriers that may prevent Sailors from seeking help. Whether at the individual, unit or installation level, there are many ways to jumpstart your dialogue at the deckplate. You can include articles and links from *Lifelink Newsletter* in your Plan of the Week or Plan of the Day, integrate psychological wellness tips into your health promotions efforts, provide your work center with [Stress Navigation Plans](#) to personalize and more. For more tips, follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) at @NavStress (U.S. Navy Operational Stress Control).



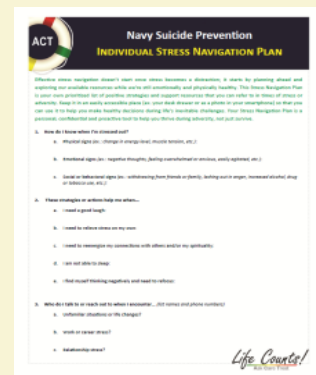
Resilience Corner

What's Your Plan to Navigate Stress?

Naval Safety Center's summer safety campaign is in full-swing, helping to ensure that the entire community enjoys the next 101 days of summer responsibly.

While planning for physical safety helps minimize risk for yourself and others, emotional safety is an equally important part of the equation to keep you healthy and mission-ready. By identifying positive resources that you can turn to during life's inevitable challenges, you can help minimize

risk of those challenges developing into crises. Just as you would program a sober buddy's number in your phone to avoid getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, you should take a moment to proactively identify who you'd reach out to and what you will do when you encounter stress and adversity.



To help you explore and identify your resources for making healthy decisions during stressful times, take a moment to fill out your [Stress Navigation Plan](#), available on [suicide.navy.mil](#). This simple proactive tool helps you think about your current practices for navigating stress while you're still emotionally healthy. In the process, you may find more positive ways to navigate stress than what you currently utilize, and will have the names and numbers of those you trust when you need to talk things through. Once completed, keep your plan in a safe place (wallet, desk, photo in your smart phone, etc.) so that you can easily access it when the need arises.

Completing a Stress Navigation Plan is a simple commitment to yourself to navigate stress safely and a reminder that seeking help—whether through a peer, leader or professional—can help you emerge from adversity stronger than before. Be sure to update your plan every few months so that you're not just ready for stress during the 101 days of summer, but all year long.

Man Up for Men's Health Month!

Tough guys—you may bask in your ability to thrive under pressure, but are you addressing all the tools needed to help you lead a healthy and productive life? Physical and psychological health are at the foundation of maintaining mission readiness. Proper nutrition and fitness, and paying a visit to your doctor regularly—which men are 24% less likely to do according to the Agency for Research and Healthcare Quality—are all a part of keeping your body in optimal shape. Whether you're facing a challenging mission, personal stress or are just trying to stay fit, remember that a healthy mind and a healthy body are your two greatest assets! Check out this post on Navy Medicine Live: [The Impact of Men's Health on Operational Readiness](#).

News and Resources

NMCP Mental Health Team
Supports Continuing Promise
2015 [Navy.mil](#)

Keep What You've Earned Play to
Live Pledge [Max.gov](#)

Wife Helps Marine Get Over his
Stubbornness and Ask for Help
with His Mental Health [Health.mil](#)

Treatment Options for PTSD
[Real Warriors](#)

Three Things You can do to be
there for Every Sailor, Every Day
[Navy.mil](#)

Transition Assistance—Resources
that Unlock the Future [NavyLive](#)

Got Pain on Your Brain? [HPRC](#)

Avoid Emotional "Bait!" [HPRC](#)

3 Ways to Connect with Fellow
Veterans as an Online Student [US
News](#)

10 Tips for Getting Organized
Ahead of a Move [Military OneSource](#)

How to Improve Your Health with
Mindfulness Meditation [DCoE Blog](#)

DoD Special Report: 2015 Warrior
Games [Defense.gov](#)

Upcoming Events

SPC Training Webinars

June 11

June 30

[Register Here](#)

Upcoming Professional Development Training for Chaplains

June 15-18 (Naval Base Kitsap,
Wa.)

DoD Warrior Games

June 18-28 (Marine Corps Base,
Quantico, Va.)

National Safety Month

June

PTSD Awareness Month

June

PCS Season is Here—Keep Up with Your Shipmates

Many Sailors are preparing for upcoming Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves this summer, a transition that can bring about as much stress as it does excitement. Transitions can mean disruption to daily routines and separation from one's social/support network (think exhausting and isolating cross-country drives for a PCS move, or transferring as a geobachelor). Even for experienced PCS pros who are eagerly awaiting the next chapter in their career and life, moves can be tough—particularly when they're occurring during an otherwise stressful time.

While our shipmates may seem to have it all under control on the outside, it's important to remain vigilant and pay attention to even the smallest signals that something isn't right, particularly as they're leaving a familiar environment and are heading to a new one. You may know bits and pieces about a shipmate's life outside of the work center—relationship or family tension, financial issues, apprehension about career changes, etc.—but may feel as though you don't know enough to get involved. Your buddy may casually dismiss his or her problems, or may not discuss them at length, but you can still reach out and offer your support so that they know they're not alone. Encourage him or her to speak with someone, perhaps a chaplain or trusted leader, to talk things through before the situation becomes overwhelming. The likelihood of making a bad decision is higher when a person is in transition. Identifying resources early is vital to keeping your shipmate healthy and mission-ready.

If you notice anything out of the norm for your shipmate, break the silence and speak with others who know him or her well—a unit leader, roommate, or family member or friend. They may have noticed the same signs or observed others that you weren't aware of, helping to "connect the dots" and facilitate the intervention process. While you may not be able to tell if your shipmate is or isn't in crisis on your own, by openly communicating to piece things together, you're helping to ensure that your buddy has resources in place to help him or her build resilience and thrive in their next phase in life.

Ongoing communication is critical. Once your shipmate has checked out of your command, don't lose track of him or her. Ensure that you have his or her accurate contact information, ask about upcoming plans, and check-in with them on their progress often. Remind your shipmate that they're still a part of your family and that you care about their well-being. Preventing suicide starts by being there for every Sailor, every day—no matter where they are.

*BONUS: Family readiness is critical during any transition. Check out this blog post from a Military OneSource spouse contributor on tips for **Surviving a PCS and a Deployment Back to Back**.*

New Video for "Every Sailor, Every Day" Campaign

The U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) and Navy Suicide Prevention Branch (OPNAV N171) have launched a new video to strengthen suicide prevention efforts at the deckplate, as part of the **"Every Sailor, Every Day"** campaign. This 17-minute film features a realistic scenario in which active command leadership, peer engagement and bystander intervention play vital roles in helping shipmates navigate stress and prevent suicide. The video can be used as part of local efforts from supplementary trainings, to education and awareness events, and can be downloaded directly from the **Navy.mil video gallery**. A DVD copy will be shipped to suicide prevention coordinators within the coming months. Read more about the "Every Sailor, Every Day" video in **All Hands Magazine**.

